

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/824,621

Amendment in response to the Office Action mailed on December 22, 2006

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently amended): Apparatus for remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of physical areas of a plurality of gaming machines gaming machine, the apparatus comprising:

a plurality of electrically operable lock mechanisms, each respectively associated with one of the plurality of physical areas of each of the gaming machines machine;

~~and each of said lock mechanisms mechanism being~~ physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area;

control circuitry independent of the gaming machines machine, said control circuitry including a processor operating under control of a stored program and coupled to each of said the lock mechanisms via a communications link for controlling operation thereof;

a data storage and retrieval system adapted to communicate with the processor and including a storage medium for storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the gaming machines and the physical areas, if any, of each of the gaming machines machine for which a person seeking access to the gaming machines machine is authorized; and

a data input device connected to at least one of the gaming machines machine and coupled to the processor, said data input device enabling a person to input at least personnel identification data that identifies the person ,

the processor being operable to compare said personnel identification data inputted by the person with said personnel identification data stored by said storage

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media that authorizes access by certain, identified personnel to certain designated gaming machines of the plurality of gaming machines and to a plurality, but not all, of said physical areas of said designated gaming machines, and cause the lock mechanisms of the plurality of physical areas to move to the unlocked position to allow access to those plurality of physical areas of the designated gaming machines when the personnel identification data inputted by the person matches any of the personnel identification data stored by said storage medium.

Claim 2 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the data input device includes a keypad.

Claim 3 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the data input device includes a card reader, the data storage and retrieval system including a personal data card assigned to a person seeking access to the machine and readable by the card reader.

Claim 4 (Original): The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the data input device further includes a keypad.

Claim 5 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, and further comprising one or more doors respectively associated with one or more areas and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, each door being movable between open and closed conditions.

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Claim 6 (Original): The apparatus of claim 5, wherein each lock mechanism directly controls access to its associated area.

Claim 7 (Original): The apparatus of claim 5, wherein each door includes a manual latch, the lock mechanism for a door indirectly controlling access to the associated area by controlling enablement and disablement of the manual latch.

Claim 8 (Original): The apparatus of claim 5, and further comprising sensing apparatus for sensing the condition of each door and each lock mechanism.

Claim 9 (Cancelled)

Claim 10 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one area includes a switch, the associated lock mechanism enabling and disabling the switch.

Claims 11-31 (Cancelled)

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Claim 32 (Currently amended): A method of remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of different, physical areas of a plurality of gaming machines machine, the method comprising:

providing each of the plurality of physical areas with an electrically operable lock mechanism which is physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions;

storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the particular gaming machines and the physical areas, if any, of the particular gaming machines machine for which a person seeking access to the gaming machines machine is authorized;

controlling the operation of the lock mechanisms via a processor independent of the gaming machines machine, said processor being coupled to each lock mechanism;

inputting at least personnel identification information into a data input device connected to at least one of the gaming machines machine that identifies a person seeking access to a plurality of said physical areas of the plurality of gaming machines machine;

comparing said inputted personnel identification data with at least said stored personnel identification data; and

remotely, electrically unlocking a plurality of the lock mechanisms of only those plurality of physical areas, less than all of said physical areas, of the particular gaming machines, for which the person seeking access is authorized when said inputted personnel identification data matches any of the personnel identification data stored by said storage medium.

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Claim 33 (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein at least a portion of the data is stored on a personal data card assigned to a person seeking access to the machine, the inputting step including reading data from the personal data card at the machine.

Claim 34 (Original): The method of claim 32, and further comprising controlling the lock mechanisms from a remote location.

Claim 35 (Original): The method of claim 32, and further comprising providing one or more areas with doors movable between open and closed conditions and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, and monitoring the condition of each door and each lock mechanism and providing an indication thereof.

Claim 36 (Original): The method of claim 32, and further comprising providing a manual override key for each lock mechanism and providing an indication when a lock mechanism has been manually operated.

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Claim 37 (Currently amended): Apparatus for remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of physical areas physical-area of a plurality of gaming machines, the apparatus comprising:

a plurality of electrically operable lock mechanisms, each respectively associated with one of the plurality of physical areas of each of the gaming machines and each lock mechanism physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area;

control circuitry independent of the gaming machines, said control circuitry including a processor operating under control of a stored program and coupled to each of the lock mechanisms of the gaming machines via a communications link for controlling operation thereof; and

a data storage and retrieval system adapted to communicate with the processor and including a storage medium for storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of certain designated gaming machines and the physical areas, if any, of the designated gaming machines for which a person seeking access to the gaming machines is authorized;

the processor being operable to compare personnel identification data inputted by a person into a data input device connected to at least one of the gaming machines with said personnel identification data stored by said storage medium that authorizes access by certain, identified personnel to at least one of the physical areas of each of the designated gaming machines, and cause the lock mechanisms of the physical areas at each of the designated gaming machines to which access is authorized to move to the unlocked position to allow access to those physical areas of the designated gaming

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machines when said inputted personnel identification data matches any of the personnel identification data stored by said storage medium.

Claim 38 (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of the lock mechanisms includes a solenoid having a plunger, the plunger being moveable between a retracted position when the solenoid is energized to enable a mechanical key to be used to unlock said lock mechanism, and an extended position when the solenoid is de-energized to prevent the mechanical key from being used to unlock said lock mechanism.

Claim 39 (Previously presented): The method of claim 32, which includes providing at least one of the lock mechanisms with a solenoid having a plunger, wherein the plunger is moveable between a retracted position when the solenoid is energized to enable a mechanical key to be used to unlock said lock mechanism, and an extended position when the solenoid is de-energized to prevent the mechanical key from being used to unlock said lock mechanism.

Claim 40 (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 37, which wherein at least one of the lock mechanisms includes a solenoid having a plunger, the plunger being moveable between a retracted position when the solenoid is energized to enable a mechanical key to be used to unlock said lock mechanism, and an extended position when the solenoid is de-energized to prevent the mechanical key from being used to unlock said lock mechanism.

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